

CELEBRATING THE 50TH
ANNIVERSARY OF VFW POST 9588

HON. MAURICE D. HINCHEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 1, 1998

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, I am rising to speak today to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the chartering of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9588, the Bailey-Richman Post, in Monticello, New York. The Post was chartered on April 4th, 1948 at the Grange Hall in Monticello and was recently honored by the National Headquarters of the VFW with a Golden Anniversary Citation. It is an honor they justly deserve. I would like to also celebrate and honor the Post's long history of public service and commitment to their community in Sullivan County. The wonderful men and women of this post have given so much to us all in times of war and in times of peace and I want them to know that their contributions are deeply felt and greatly appreciated. I ask all of my colleagues to join me in celebrating the upcoming 50th anniversary of the Bailey-Richman VFW Post 9588.

30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FAIR
HOUSING ACT

HON. DALE E. KILDEE

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 1, 1998

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honor to rise before you today to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act by designating the month of April as Fair Housing Month in Flint, Michigan.

Michigan, and the City of Flint in particular, has a long history of promoting fair housing. In February, 1968, the citizens of Flint voted to adopt the first open-housing ordinance in the country. As a member of the Michigan State Legislature, I introduced the very first Open Housing Act which outlawed housing discrimination in Michigan. In my many years of public service, I have continued the fight for fair and equitable housing because I believe our country must grant every person an equal chance to succeed in America.

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 celebrates its anniversary this year with the distinction of being one of the most successful civil rights laws in history. Thanks to the cooperation and support of hundreds of state and local governments, more and more Americans are enjoying the simple freedom of choosing where to live.

The Fair Housing Act was enacted in 1968, shortly after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination. The Act bars housing discrimination on account of race, color, religion, sex, disability, family status and national origin. The Act covers the sale, rental financing and advertising of almost all housing in the nation.

Mr. Speaker, although we have made significant strides in combating housing discrimination, we still have a long way to go. It is illegal, immoral and intolerable and it has no place in our present or future. During this month of observance of the 30th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act, let us work together to preserve the principles of this important leg-

islation by eliminating discrimination and ensuring that all Americans are afforded the opportunity to live with dignity and pride.

TRIBUTE TO EPSILON KAPPA

HON. NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 1, 1998

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Epsilon Kappa, St. John's University's Chapter of Sigma Delta Pi, the National Collegiate Hispanic Society which, for seventy-seven years has been promoting Hispanic culture and language in the United States. In light of the fact that we are honoring Hispanic heritage and culture, I am choosing to make this tribute in my native language Spanish.

(Ms. VELÁZQUEZ submitted two paragraphs in Spanish.)

Successful organizations like this cannot promote themselves alone. They need the guidance and vision of talented leaders like Professor Marie-Lise Gazarian-Gautier, a renowned scholar in literature at St. John's University, Coordinator of the Graduate Spanish Program and Moderator of Epsilon Kappa, St. John's Chapter of Sigma Delta Pi. Dr. Gazarian is affiliated with universities in Paris-France, Moscow-Russia, and Santiago the 1945 Chilean Nobel Prize Laureate. She is also author of several books, among them: "Gabriela Mistral: La maestra de Elqui." In addition, she serves as Foreign Correspondent for several literary journals abroad and has hosted a nationwide series on "Contemporary Hispanic Fiction" produced by WCBS-TV and St. John's Television Center. In 1996 she was appointed Judge of the Selection Committee for the Poet Laureate from Queens. She currently serves as Vice President for the Northeast of Sigma Delta Pi.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to rise with me today in honor of the seventy-seventh anniversary of Sigma Delta Pi and the invaluable contribution its chapters are making to our Hispanic Culture and society throughout the United States. We wish Sigma Delta Pi continued success and recognize St. John's University's Chapter, Epsilon Kappa, for its outstanding work in promoting Hispanic culture in America.

FORMER CONGRESSWOMAN BELLA
ABZUG

HON. JERROLD NADLER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 1, 1998

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I came to the floor bearing the unfortunate news that former Congresswoman Bella Abzug had died. I would now like to take this opportunity to say a few words about our colleague, who affected this House and this nation deeply.

Bella Abzug was a woman ahead of her time. I am not the first to come to this conclusion, and I am certainly not the only person who will point out this fact as the world reflects on this loss. So perhaps it is fitting to go one

step further, and say: Bella Abzug was not only a woman ahead of her time. She was a woman who ushered in a new time.

I don't think it is unreasonable to say that Bella Abzug changed the way Americans think about female politicians, and for a very uncomplicated reason: she made us do so. She wasn't afraid to demand the respect she deserved, and I think maybe the perfect example of that comes from a story she told about why she started wearing her trademark hats.

"When I first became a lawyer," she said a few years ago, "only about 2 percent of the Bar was women. People would always think I was a secretary. In those days, professional women in the business world wore hats. So I started wearing hats." And as we all know, she never stopped.

But Bella Abzug didn't go into politics out of personal ambition. One of the fundamental things about her, maybe her defining element—beneath the character, beneath the voice, beneath the hats—was her tireless social conscience. She had no time for typical politicians, and even less time for politics as usual. And not only was she driven to do the right thing, but she demanded the same of everyone she came in contact with.

I remember that whenever I would talk to her, she would say to me, "Are you doing enough? Are you doing enough?" And then, occasionally, almost begrudgingly, she would say, "Well, you're doing okay." I would leave our conversation feeling as if I had received the greatest compliment one could ever receive.

That is one of my memories of Bella, and I am sure many Members of Congress have others they would like to share. That is why we will be holding a Special Order following the upcoming district work period, where I invite our colleagues with memories to share to come forward, and to give to former Representative Abzug the tribute which is surely her due.

Finally, regarding my colleague I can only conclude with this: when Bella Abzug left the House of Representatives, this chamber became a poorer place. Likewise, yesterday the world became a poorer place, though all of us are richer for having experienced Bella's presence.

REFORMING BILINGUAL
EDUCATION

HON. FRANK RIGGS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 1, 1998

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation to reform the federal bilingual education program to insure its primary focus is on teaching children English.

English is our official common and commercial language. Our goal should be that every child in America entering Kindergarten will be able to read and write English by the end of the First Grade. Other students should be expected to master English within two academic years.

Over the past few years, there has been a growing amount of evidence that bilingual education classes—those using a child's native language in instruction—are having a harmful impact on our Nation's English language

learners. While they may work for some children, other children spend years isolated in classes that do little to prepare them for future success.

I am concerned that the current federal Bilingual Education Act requires 75 percent of available funds to be used for this form of instruction. My bill would change all of this. First, it would turn the Bilingual Education Act into a formula grant to the States and allow the States to determine the method of instruction to be used by eligible entities receiving grant awards.

Of equal importance, this legislation would require that a parent must sign a consent form prior to the time a child is placed in a program using native language instruction. We are hearing more and more reports that schools are ignoring the wishes of parents regarding the participation of their children in bilingual education classes. For example, it took Erika Velasquez two years to have her son, who is fluent in both English and Spanish, removed from a class for Spanish speakers. While intentions may have been good, his elementary school was preventing her son, Tony, from mainstreaming into a regular classroom and confusing him as to what language he was to be using.

Mr. Speaker, the success of every new wave of immigrants coming to the United States in search of the American dream has always been dependent on several factors: their willingness to work hard; their ability to mainstream into society; and, most importantly, their ability to learn the English language.

It is generally easier to help adult learners because they have already completed their basic education and only need to learn English to continue their schooling or obtain a job. For children, it is a different story. If they come to our country when they are ready to enter school, they have twelve years of education before them. For these children, much of their ability to succeed in school is dependent on their ability to read, write, speak, and think in English. However, as I mentioned earlier, many children are not learning English.

Are these children being taught English? Yes, but, unfortunately, English language instruction is limited and they end up spending far too many years in classes which preserve their native language to the detriment of learning English. This prevents them from mainstreaming into society, from communicating with their peers and from learning the skills they need to be successful once they leave school.

Proponents of bilingual education will claim this form of instruction is necessary to keep children current in their other academic classes while learning English so they don't fall too far behind and end up dropping out. However, statistics reveal that nationally over one-third of Hispanic students do not complete high school. This figure jumps to 50 percent in my own State of California. Simply, these programs are failing to give children the skills they need to stay in school and succeed. And our children deserve better.

The parents of these children did not bring them to our country to be relegated to low paying jobs. They brought them here to have the same opportunity for success as all other children. They want for their children the opportunity for them to become doctors, lawyers, teachers or whatever else they want to be.

It is my view that the major focus of any class for limited English speaking children should be the attainment of the English language skills they need to mainstream into regular classrooms as soon as possible. While bilingual education may work for some children, it has not proven itself to be the most effective solution for all children.

It is time that we allow States and local schools and parents the right to select the method of English language instruction most appropriate for their children. This legislation will accomplish this goal.

Mr. Speaker, as Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Youth and Families, I intend to make this legislation a priority. I urge my colleagues to support my bill—the English Language Fluency Act—and insure that all English language learners obtain the skills they need to succeed.

H.R. 3636, THE AFRICA SEEDS OF HOPE ACT OF 1998

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 1, 1998

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, today, Congressman BEREUTER and I are introducing in the House legislation to advance agricultural and rural development in Africa.

As President Clinton continues his historic trip through Africa, it is especially fitting that this legislation be introduced, because it will help make good on the promise of closer ties between the United States and the people of Africa.

Rural and agricultural markets are vital to African trade and economic development. If we are serious about improving the economic position of Africa in global markets, we must encourage women and small-scale farmers and entrepreneurs to be the engine of growth. I commend my friend, DOUG BEREUTER, for his hard-work and leadership on this legislation, which takes an important step forward in encouraging and strengthening those vital resources.

WHY IT MATTERS

While the Congress and the Administration are right to focus on African trade and investment, many African countries are not yet ready to graduate from aid recipient to trading partner. The poorest countries in Africa still need substantial foreign assistance and debt relief to accomplish things that increased trade and investment will not address.

Chief among these is combating hunger.

Over the last 30 years, the number of undernourished people in Africa has more than doubled, to around 215 million today.

Hunger causes profound—and needless—human suffering. It also undermines the development of human and physical capital necessary to fuel economic development and break the cycle of poverty.

The spread of democracy, the availability of advanced agricultural technology, and the emergence of robust voluntary and civic organizations throughout Africa present us, today, with an opportunity to significantly reduce hunger and poverty in Africa. By carefully targeting U.S. assistance on agriculture and rural development, H.R. 3636 will allow us to harness this opportunity.

WHAT IT DOES

H.R. 3636 will advance rural and agricultural development in Africa by directing the Administration to place a higher priority on these areas in its assistance policy toward Africa, and by improving existing programs to combat hunger and ensure that Africa's food supply is secure.

This bill does not call for increased U.S. spending although I believe the Congress should support higher aid levels for Africa. By carefully targeting aid programs already in place, and by fine-tuning the way they are administered, this bill will allow the U.S. to get the most out of its development programs.

RURAL FINANCE

First, this bill would take several steps to increase U.S. support for rural finance in Africa, by requiring U.S. AID to:

Develop a micro-enterprise strategy for Africa;

Place a high-priority on providing credit and micro-credit to small-scale farmers—especially women, who produce up to 80 percent of the total food supply in Africa; and

Support producer marketing associations and enhance the capacity and expertise of African business associations by: Using available assistance programs; cooperating with U.S. and local NGOs; and facilitating partnerships between U.S. and African businesses and cooperatives.

This bill also urges U.S. support for the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), which provides loans for famine relief. And, it encourages OPIC to work with U.S. AID to support agricultural and rural development in sub-Saharan Africa through available funds, loans and insurance.

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND EXTENSION

Second, this bill would make U.S. efforts in Africa more effective by increasing program coordination.

It directs AID and the Department of Agriculture to develop a plan for coordinating international and national agricultural centers, research, and extension efforts with two goals in mind: To ensure that research responds to the needs of African farmers; and to support farmers' self-reliance by specifically targeting their agricultural skills.

The bill also expresses the sense of Congress that U.S. AID devote increased resources and staff to agriculture and rural development.

Well-coordinated policies that are more responsive to the needs of the people we are trying to assist will maximize the impact of U.S. assistance without increasing funding levels.

FOOD SECURITY

Third, this bill will bolster the existing Africa Food Security Initiative, which supplies government-to-government food aid to combat hunger and promote economic development.

Currently, this Initiative receives \$31 million in funding from AID. To maximize the efficiency of current programs, H.R. 3636 directs AID to: Target its resources where they are most needed—on programs and projects that focus on infants, young children, women, and the rural poor; consult with and consider the views of the people these programs are trying to help; and ensure that programs are conducted by U.S. and African NGOs, to increase accountability and long-term sustainability.

FOOD ASSISTANCE

Finally, this bill will reform the Food Security Commodity Reserve to increase its long-term